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THE GREAT CONFLICT.

"We wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."—Ephesians vi. 12.

In this passage of scripture, as in many others, there is an express reference to a mighty conflict, carried on in the moral and spiritual world, between the powers of light and the powers of darkness, the sons of God and the children of the wicked one. "*We wrestle*, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

The fact of such a conflict I hardly need take time to consider. It has been so obvious even to heathen nations, as to give rise to a belief in two opposing divinities; the god of light, and the god of darkness; the one good, and the other evil. This fact is perfectly obvious to every observer of the affairs of men. Every where, we see virtue conflicting with vice, right with wrong, holiness with sin. Indeed, we more than see this order of things; we *feel* it in our own breasts. Every man—who is not so far gone in iniquity, as to make no resistance to its reigning power—is conscious of an inward struggle. He has evidence enough of the great conflict of which I speak, in his own spirit. Assuming, therefore, the *fact* of the conflict referred to in the text, and in a multitude of other scriptures, it is proposed, in this discourse, to consider,

I. The leaders in it.

II. The scene of it.

III. The hosts engaged.

IV. The manner in which it is carried on. And

V. What are to be its issues or results.

The leaders in the conflict of which we speak, are the Lord Jesus Christ on the one side, and the Prince of devils on the other. This we learn from many passages of scripture, in which these two great personages are set over, one against the other, in the attitude of generalissimos, or leaders. To give but a single example: In the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation, immediately preceding the annunciation of the Millennium, John saw the heavens opened, "and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him is called *Faithful* and *True*, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns, and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself; and he was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and his name was called *the Word of God*. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean." There can be no doubt as to the character of this royal personage. "His name was called (*the Logos*) *the Word of God*." He was unquestionably *the Lord Jesus Christ*.

And against whom is his mighty power directed? Against "*the beast and the false prophet*," and all those who act under their influence. And who is *the beast* here spoken of? Who is it that moves and actuates him—that gives him "his power, his seat, and his great authority?" It is "the dragon, that old serpent, called *the devil*, and *Satan*." (Rev. 13: 2.) Here, then, as in many other places, we find Christ heading his forces on the one side, and Satan his on the other. We find them standing one over against the other in the attitude of opposing leaders.

I. The Lord Jesus Christ, rather than God the Father, is leader of the sacramental host in the great conflict of which we speak, because of *his office and work as Mediator*. He now sits on a mediatorial throne; as mediator, he is king in heaven; all power is committed unto him both in heaven and on earth; he is head over all things in the church, and is represented in Scripture as *the Captain of Salvation*.

II. We inquire, secondly, as to *the scene, the theatre, the place* of the conflict between the Lord Jesus Christ and the powers of darkness. This is emphatically, *earth*. The struggle does not reach so high as heaven. It does not enter into and disturb that world of rest, of peace, of everlasting joy. We read, indeed, in the Revelations, of a "war in heaven;" but the heaven there spoken of is a mystical, symbolical heaven, and not the happy abode of the saints in light.

Nor does the conflict of which we are speaking extend properly to hell. That world is the prison of subdued rebels, where they are reserved in chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day; and not the place where they put on armor, and join battle, and contest the point for victory and glory. The scene of the conflict between the powers of light, and the powers of darkness, is emphatically *earth*. This world is the theatre of it. It is here that Satan has usurped his dominion, and set up his throne. It is the family of man that he claims as his vassals and victims. He vaunts himself as the

god of *this world*. It is to dispossess him of his usurped dominion, rescue his victims from between his teeth, and send him back, subdued and ashamed, to his prison in the world of fire, that the Lord Jesus Christ has put on his armor, and become the Captain of Salvation. Earth, then, is especially the scene of the conflict. It moves and deeply interests other worlds, but the *centre*, the *theatre* of it is here.

III. We inquire, in the third place, as to *the hosts engaged* in this conflict, under their respective leaders.

On the side of Satan, there are enlisted, first of all, a great multitude of *evil spirits*, like himself. All these spirits were once holy and happy in heaven. But they joined in the miserable revolt of their Prince, and fell with him under the power and the curse of sin.

These evil spirits are very numerous. "Our name is legion," said they on one occasion, "for *we are many*." They are also subtle, malicious, and of great power. They are represented in the text, and in other places, as belonging to different ranks and orders. These are "principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spirits of wickedness in high places." These spirits of darkness have long been permitted to roam the earth, to have access to the minds of men, to plot and scheme against the Church, and for a time to carry their diabolical schemes into execution. By the great majority of human beings, they have been not only served, but worshipped *as gods*. The things which the heathen sacrifice, all over the earth, "they sacrifice to devils, and not to God," 1 Cor. 10 : 20. These legions of fallen spirits constitute a material part of the host of their mighty leader.

The other part of Satan's host consists of *wicked men* here on the earth, and these constitute a vast multitude, divided into different classes, all trained and disciplined for their master's service. Here are hundreds of millions of pagan idolators, all the worshippers of devils, and all besotted in their delusions and sins. Here are millions upon millions of the votaries of the false prophet, whose eyes Satan has blinded, whose feet he has bound, and who are led captive by him at his will. Here are other millions of dispersed Jews, the inveterate enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom Satan employs, in different parts of the earth, to promote his cause and injure the Church. Of the devotees of Rome there is a prodigious multitude—Pope, cardinals, priests, monks, crowned monarchs and sceptred kings, titled churchmen and degraded serfs, all enlisted and marshaled under the same great leader, and intent upon doing their master's work. Still nearer to us, Satan has his regiments of atheists and infidels, of scoffers and blasphemers, to whom he assigns an important part in this conflict, and who will deny him no service which it is in their power to bestow. He has, also, his *worldly* men, who love, pursue and extol the world, and exert an influence to draw all around them into its engulfing vortex. He has his *sensual* men—men of appetite and lust, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, who scorn to sin and die alone, but are intent upon destroying a multitude with them. He has

his *self-righteous* men—of sober face and proud heart, who believe themselves, and teach others, that persons of sober, honest life have no need of a Savior, and should never humble themselves to embrace him. In addition to all these, he has a band of masked *hypocrites*, who conceal their sins that they may the more successfully practise them ;—and another band of *self-deceivers*, whom he has effectually blinded to their real characters, and is hurrying along to the judgment with a lie in their right hand. There are also the open deniers of God's essential truth—the propagators of “damnable heresies”—whom Satan persuades to reject doctrines which he believes himself, and to scoff at realities, under the torturing power of which he writhes and burns.

Such, in brief, are the hosts of the great adversary—the legions which he has at his control, and with which he has undertaken to wage conflict with the Son of God. Assuredly, his armies are great and terrible ; and he is himself an enemy of prodigious power, whom no being in this world can prudently or safely despise.

On the side of the Son of God, and in opposition to Satan, there are, in the first place, legions of *holy angels*. These are a class of created spirits, superior to ourselves—of fervid love, of glowing intelligence, of burning zeal, of mighty power, who are represented as standing in the presence of God, and flying on his errands of mercy and of wrath. They are particularly conversant with the affairs of this world ; are deeply interested in the great work of redemption ; and have enlisted, with all their energies, in that mighty conflict between holiness and sin, of which earth is the principal theatre and object. They ascend and descend on the ladder which reaches from earth to heaven. They conflict directly, as no other beings can, with the Prince and the powers of darkness. They are ministers of wrath and vengeance to hardened transgressors, as well as of comfort and deliverance to the oppressed children of God. When Lot was to be delivered, and Sodom destroyed ; ministering angels were employed to effect both these objects. When an ungodly tyrant was about to invade and distress the Church, the angel of the Lord was sent into his camp, and 185,000 of his army fell in a single night. When Peter was shut up in prison, expecting in a few hours to be barbarously slain, an angel opens his prison doors, and conducts him in safety to his friends.

The number of the holy angels is immensely great, and they are all the devoted servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. They heralded his entrance into this world with songs of praise. They strengthened him during his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. And now that he has ascended up on high, they wait his commands, and do his pleasure. They are to be ministering spirits to his Church, so long as it shall need their ministry on the earth. And in the consummation of all things, when the mystery of God shall be finished, they are to bring together his elect, from the one end of heaven to the other ; and are to gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire. The offices sustained by

the holy angels, the works done and to be done by them, sufficiently show that they constitute a material part of the host of the great Captain of our Salvation.

Another part of Christ's militant host consists of *his people*, in the present world. These, though in themselves weak, are "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." They are represented in the scriptures as "*laborers together with Christ*," sustained and strengthened by his Holy Spirit, they "*have done exploits*," and they can do the same again. Through faith in their Divine Redeemer, they have "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, waxed valiant in fight, and put to flight the armies of the aliens." Under the protection of their great Captain, they are able to contend successfully "against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spirits of wickedness in high places."

This part of the Redeemer's host, like that in the other world, consists of different ranks and orders. Some are leaders, standard-bearers; while others hold subordinate stations. Some can do one thing for their Divine Master, and some another. But all can effect *something* in the holy war. To each is committed *some* talent, which he is required and expected to improve; and in the improving of which he may aid materially in bringing the great conflict between good and evil, light and darkness, to a successful issue.

In speaking of the hosts engaged in this conflict, I have made no mention of those who have already departed this life. The holy dead are, indeed, the servants of Christ; but they are no longer his militant servants. They *rest* from their previous labors and warfare, and their works follow them. The sinful dead are, in like manner, the enemies of Christ. But they are subdued under his feet. They are no longer in a situation to contend against him, or to oppose the triumphs of his holy kingdom.

IV. We come now to the fourth and more important part of the subject—the manner in which the great conflict of which we have spoken is, at present, carried on.

On the part of Satan, it is carried on in various ways. It is carried on, in the first place, by *deception* and *falsehood*. Satan is called in Scripture "a liar, and the father of it;" and he has abundantly shown how well he deserves to bear these opprobrious epithets. He commenced his attack upon our first mother with a lie. He compassed his design upon her, by the grossest deception. And from that hour to the present, he has been carrying into effect his dreadful designs against the best interests of our race, by deception and falsehood. He deceives one person under this pretence, and another under that, and a third under something else. He persuades some, that there is no truth in the Bible—no God, no Savior, no heaven, no hell. He leads some to discard the essential doctrines of the Bible; so that while they profess to receive it in form, they reject it in fact. He even persuades

them to deny his own existence; quite willing, if they do but serve him well, that they should disbelieve that he is. To a numerous class of persons, he presents the world under the most alluring aspects; assures them that it is the great good; quickens them in the pursuit of it; immerses them in it; and thus cheats them to their final ruin. He flatters many with the prospect of long life, and much earthly enjoyment, leading them to say, with a sinner of old, "Soul, thou has much goods laid up in store for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry;" when God is saying to that soul, and verifying what he says, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." If by no false suggestion, the great adversary can keep the deluded sinner quiet—if his attention becomes arrested and his heart distressed; he immediately undertakes to discourage him with difficulties, and to deter him from his object, by fictitious fears. 'Your sins are too great to be forgiven.' 'You have sinned away the day of grace.' 'If you undertake to become a Christian, you will never succeed. Better dismiss the perplexing subject; or at least delay it till a more convenient season.' Such are some of the malicious lies, with which Satan fills the minds of men here on earth. Such are some of the ways in which he carries on the dreadful conflict against them. O, that the simple children of men would no longer be duped and deluded by him! "In vain," says Solomon, "is the net spread in the sight of any bird." Yet the net of the fell destroyer *is* spread in the sight of the wayward children of men, and they fall into it, by hundreds and thousands.

Again; Satan carries on the conflict in which he is engaged by *direct temptation*; or by presenting motives before men to draw them into sin. In this dreadful business he has had long experience, and has acquired consummate skill. He has access to the minds of men; he knows their feelings, propensities, and habits; and he adapts his enticements to their circumstances, so as to give them the utmost power. Some he finds in such a state of mind, that he can easily draw them into the grossest vices, and plunge them into downright infidelity. Others, who have too much pride or self-respect to be ruined in this way, he easily engages in the pursuit of riches and honors, and thus effectually prevents them from securing their salvation. Those who have been religiously educated, and who retain some sense of the value and importance of religion, might not readily be brought to treat the subject with open scorn and contempt. Satan will hardly *try* them with a temptation such as this. But he *will* try to induce them to put the matter off, and in this stealthy but fatal endeavor he will be very likely to succeed. He finds some, whose feelings are so much engaged on the subject of religion, that it would be vain to attempt allaying them by ordinary inducements. But these can often be *diverted*, by artful methods, to their final ruin. Some seemingly harmless amusement is proposed; or some diverting book is thrown in their way; or some other temptation is presented which will be likely to take; and the poor soul *is* taken, and its ruin is sealed.

Satan has had much to do, during the last six thousand years, with

poor, frail, fallen human nature, and he knows it well. He knows the weak sides of men; knows all their exposed points; knows how, and where, and when to ply his darts, and when to desist. He will not be likely to attempt to do what he has every reason to suppose cannot be done. He will not be likely to shock individuals with suggestions, for which their minds are not prepared. He wields his weapons with consummate skill, and adapts his temptations to characters and circumstances, so as to give them the utmost power of which they are capable.

I remark again, that Satan carries on the conflict in which he is engaged, not merely by personal efforts, or by agents from the invisible world, but by *appropriate instruments selected from among men*. I have remarked already, that a part of his host consists of wicked men here in this world. It may be added, that this is a very effective part. In ten thousand instances, men become the tempters and destroyers one of another. They consent to take the devil's work out of his own hands, and often perform it more effectually than he could himself.

Satan has fit instruments, in this world, for all sorts of mischief which he chooses to perpetrate. He sets one to this deed of darkness, and another to that. He employs this man to seduce and ruin souls in one way, and that in another. He has his preachers to publish his lies for him, to dress them up in the semblance of truth, and support them by all the learning and eloquence of which they are masters. He has his presses and periodicals, employed for the same diabolical purpose. He has the wealth of the world, in great measure, at his control, and he can pour it out with an exhaustless profusion, whenever any favorite object is thereby to be promoted. He contrives and directs the modes of education, in most countries, so as to lead the young immortal directly away from God, and fill his mind with errors and prejudices that will be likely to prove fatal to his soul. He stands at the fountain head of moral influence, and manages to control public opinion and public measures, in most instances, according to his will. In short, the pretence of Satan, to be the god of this world, is no vain boast. He is, and for thousands of years has been, to a great extent, *the god of this world*. He plans, and his subject vassals execute. He stands behind the scene, and manages the wires, and thousands, and tens of thousands, here in this world, move at his bidding, and obediently perform for him his work of death.

I remark farther, that Satan carries on the conflict in which he is engaged, by *corrupting and perverting the best things*. How often has he succeeded in corrupting the Church of God! The Church of Israel was established with great solemnity, by the patriarchs of the Jewish nation. It was furnished with inspired teachers, with direct revelations, with holy ordinances and institutions, and with all the requisite means of preserving itself pure. But yet how soon was it corrupted! And in process of time, how dreadfully corrupted! In the days of our Savior and his Apostles, it had become an engine of evil, rather

than of good ; a means of promoting Satan's kingdom, rather than the kingdom of Christ.

At the ushering in of the new dispensation, the Church of God was purified. The unbelieving Jews were cut off, and the believing Gentiles soon to be grafted in. New revelations were made ; new rites were instituted ; more powerful Divine influences were bestowed ; and it appeared, for a time, as though the Christian Church might be able to maintain its integrity. But soon, again, the great adversary got into the sheep-fold. The mystery of iniquity began to work. And it continued to work more and more, until the Christian community became almost entirely corrupted. It was so corrupted, that nothing remained to its living members but to separate themselves from the putrid mass, and re-organize the Church upon its primitive foundation.

Satan often contrives to pervert and destroy the good influence of the Church, by *intestine broils*. He foment divisions among its members, and sets them to biting and devouring one another ; and thus, instead of carrying on the war against him, they essentially aid him in his dark designs.

There is nothing from which Satan has more to fear, than from *revivals of religion* ; and there is nothing which he has more sedulously endeavored to corrupt. And in this attempt he has too often succeeded. In some instances, he has gone into the work himself ; has actually turned revival preacher ; and has soon changed the pure and healthful stream of revival influence into a turbid and poisonous current. The great revivals under the reformers were corrupted in this way. Fanatical individuals were stirred up, who, under the pretence of inspiration and perfection, introduced the most flagrant disorders, and involved all Germany in war. In the same way, the revivals in England, in the days of the Commonwealth, and in this country, at the time of Whitfield, were perverted, corrupted, and brought to a melancholy close. A fanatical spirit was awakened, extravagancies were encouraged, and prejudices were excited against all serious religion, which have continued to the present time.

The hand of the great adversary was never more visible, than in the transactions to which I here refer. One of the most effective methods, undoubtedly, of carrying on the conflict in which he is engaged, is by so perverting and corrupting the things of Christ, as to change their character, and mould them into a subserviency to his own designs. In this way, he enters, as it were, the Christian camp, wheels round the artillery of the Church, and discharges it in the face of those whom it was prepared and intended to defend.

I shall mention but another mode in which Satan carries on this conflict, and that is by *persecution, war, and blood*. If he can think of no other method of counteracting and defeating the people of God, and promoting his designs against them, he will (if possible) cut them off from the earth. This method was employed with terrible effect, in the early days of the Christian Church, when Pagan emperors and priests were let loose upon the defenceless disciples, and butchered

them without measure or mercy. And scarcely had the persecutions of Pagan Rome ceased, when those of Papal Rome commenced; and these have been continued even to our own times. The Papal harlot has been almost perpetually drunk with blood. The blood of myriads upon myriads of saints and martyrs, destroyed in some instances by the extremest tortures, cries in the ear of heaven against her.

And the blood of war has often been added to that of palpable persecution. The Hussites in Bohemia, the Albigenses, the Waldenses, were wasted and worn out by long and desolating religious wars. The Protestants in France could have no rest or peace, till by persecutions and wars the greater part of them were either slaughtered or driven into exile. The reformation in Germany was not finally established, until after the close of a thirty years' war. In the Netherlands, too, the reformed religion was not established, until the whole country had been drenched in blood. Nor is it likely that Satan has yet ceased to thirst for the blood of the saints, or that he has ceased to shed it. The prophecies rather indicate that, as the conflict between good and evil advances, and the contest thickens, deadly weapons will be again resorted to, and the struggle may end in blood. The Lord purify and prepare his Church for that trying and dreadful day!

I have thus exhibited, as fully as I am able in a single discourse, the *manner* in which Satan carries on his side of the conflict. Let us now turn over to the other side, and consider by what methods the great Leader of the sacramental host of God's elect opposes him.

Christ opposes the efforts of Satan and his legions, not by *annihilating* them. This he might do at a word. He made them out of nothing; he sustains them in existence every moment; and by simply withdrawing his supporting hand, he might suffer them to sink back into that nothing from which they came. But it does not comport with the purposes of our Divine Lord to treat his enemies after this manner. A victory obtained by such means would be unglorious, compared with that at which the Redeemer aims.

Neither, in opposing the efforts of Satan and his hosts, is it the plan of Christ immediately to *confine* them. They will be confined, at the appointed season. They will be placed in a situation where they can disturb the universe no more. But for the present, they are permitted to have their liberty—to pass to and fro in the earth—to roam up and down in it—for the TRIAL of the successive generations of men. Their temptations constitute a necessary part of *our trial*. And until this object is accomplished—until the generations of men have been sufficiently tried in this way, the present liberty of fallen spirits will not be restrained.

I remark again, Christ does not now oppose the efforts of Satan and his hosts, by performing *miracles*. He might crush them instantly and most effectually, in this way. At any point, and every point, he might hedge up their path, and defeat their designs, by the exertion of his omnipotent power. In the days of his flesh, our Savior often did control the malicious purposes of Satan, by his miracles. He ejected the

devils from many who were possessed with them, and delivered those whom Satan had bound. But at present, he has ceased to carry on the conflict after this manner. He prefers other methods of defeating his adversaries, and of fulfilling upon them the counsels of his will. Some of these methods will now be briefly pointed out.

As Satan operates, on his part, by deception and falsehood, our Savior opposes him by *publishing truth*. It was part of the object for which Christ came into the world, that he might bear witness to the truth. He *did* bear witness to the truth. He has given to the world a whole volume of truth—truth attested by the highest evidence—truth enough to contradict and refute all the lies that Satan has ever uttered. To be sure, this truth is not uttered in such a way, that it cannot possibly be resisted. If persons are disposed to reject Christ's truth, and receive, in preference to it, the delusions of Satan; they *can*—they *must*. It is necessary to the purposes of their trial, that they should have as much liberty as this. Still, the truth of Christ is made so plain, that no one has the least occasion to mistake it. No one *can* mistake it, who is willing to deal honestly and faithfully with himself. When Satan suggests that there is no future life—no heaven to hope for, or hell to fear; Christ opposes him by *telling the truth*. When Satan persuades the delaying sinner, that life is long, that death is at a great distance, and that he has time enough yet to pursue his pleasures; Christ opposes him by *telling the truth*. When Satan would persuade the awakened sinner, that he has sinned away the day of grace; that his sins are so many and aggravated that they can never be forgiven; that there is now no hope in his case; Christ opposes him again by *telling the truth*. And so of all the other malicious falsehoods of the adversary. To his falsehoods, Christ opposes his own truth. To be sure, this truth may be rejected, and the lie believed; still, Christ does not, on this account, desist from his great purpose of holding up the truth.

Again, as Satan operates by presenting, with much skill and power, tempting, seducing motives to the minds of men; so Christ opposes him, by presenting *other motives*;—by setting at work other and counteracting influences. The motives of the Gospel are intrinsically of great power. I see not how they could have been made more powerful, and still have been adapted to the circumstances of beings on trial. They address themselves to the understandings and feelings of men; to their reason and conscience; to their hopes and fears, and sympathies; indeed, to every principle of holy action within them. These various motives are all in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ; and by him are faithfully presented and powerfully urged. In point of intrinsic weight and strength, they as much overbalance all that Satan can offer, as a mountain outweighs a feather. And yet, so strangely perverted is the natural mind of man—so deranged and blunted are all the nobler sensibilities of the soul, that Satan gains a hearing more readily than Christ. His motives are yielded to, while Christ's are re-

jected. Men carelessly turn away from the great Deliverer, and consent to be led captive by the Destroyer at his will.

I remark farther, that as Satan accomplishes much by his instruments, so Christ, in opposing him, employs on a large scale the *instrumentality of others*. He employs all the countless myriads of the holy angels. Some of these are of equal power with Satan himself; and are as much skilled in doing good, as he is in the arts of wickedness. These legions of angels are all subject to the Mediatorial reign of Christ. They are all of them his devoted and delighted servants. They fly on his errands from world to world, and aid him in his mighty conflict against the Prince and the powers of darkness.

Associated with them in the same employment, are Christ's faithful people here on the earth. And I have often thought, my Christian friends, that we never, in this life, approach so near to the angels, and become so much like them, as when we co-operate with them in works of benevolence, and in promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ. The faithful pastor, as he stands on his watch-tower, and gives to the gospel trumpet a certain sound; or as he goes from house to house among the people of his charge, inculcating truth, administering consolation, warning and teaching every man;—the self-denying missionary, plying his labor of love among the degraded heathen, endeavoring to open the long sealed eye, and pour the balm of heavenly comfort into the stupid, vacant heart;—the Sabbath-school teacher, diligently instructing and watching over his class;—the female tract distributor, flitting from house to house, bearing her little winged messenger of mercy;—the pious mother, patiently toiling for her children, directing their infant minds, and endeavoring to train them up for God;—the steadfast, devoted Christian, standing ever in his lot, exhibiting a holy, consistent example, letting his light shine, doing good to all men as he has opportunity, especially to those who are of the household of faith;—all these, and others like them, seem to me to be but little lower than the angels, and to be *very like* them in the character of their pursuits. They belong, with them, to the same host of the great Captain of Salvation, and are employed, as instruments, in advancing the same cause, and carrying forward to its termination the same spiritual conflict.

Christ carries on this conflict, in part, by his *providential arrangements*. But it is remarkable that, in these arrangements, he does not aim at immediately and totally crushing his adversary. This he might do, at any time, with the utmost ease. But for the *trial* of the successive generations of men, he permits Satan and his legions to live and to act, to form plans and to carry them into execution, until a fair experiment of wickedness has been made, and until some special interposition in Providence is needed, to secure the safety of his Church. Thus, in the antediluvian world, Christ lengthened out the chain of Satan, and permitted him to carry into effect his designs, till the Church of God was all but extinct; and then, by one dreadful stroke, he frustrated and destroyed the works of his adversary, and emptied the earth of those hardened rebels who had so long ravaged and corrupted it.

And so in Egypt, he suffered Satan to prosper, and wickedness to triumph, till both his people and their oppressors had been sufficiently tried; and then, by a succession of awful providences, he humbled his enemies, and delivered his Church. And so in the days of Mordecai, Christ bore with the enemies of his people, till their diabolical designs were all but accomplished, and his Church was brought to the brink of ruin; and then he interposed, in a most remarkable manner, and turned their weapons against themselves.

These instances illustrate the manner in which Christ often conflicts with his proud adversary, by means of providential arrangements. It need never discourage the people of God, to see wickedness prospering, and Satan triumphing for a season. Their Lord permits this, for their *trial*; and for the trial of all concerned. He designs, in this way, to try the faith of his people, to teach them their dependence, and excite them to more earnest prayer. In this way, also, he displays his grace and his power, and renders the interpositions of his hand more conspicuous and glorious.

I remark once more, Christ carries on the conflict in which he is engaged, by the *power and influence of the Holy Spirit*. But this influence is not exerted to the full extent, and with all the efficiency, of which it is capable. Christ might, by his Spirit, convert the hearts of all men, and perfectly sanctify them, and thus end the conflict at a stroke. But such an exercise of power would hardly consist with the probation of men. It would not consist with those designs which God is pursuing in reference to this world. But Christ is sending his Spirit to give energy and efficacy to the truths of his gospel, to *that* extent, and in all those instances, which will be, in the end, most glorious to himself. By his Spirit, Christ is continually defeating and weakening his adversary, and often in such ways as are peculiarly annoying to him. Thus when, by much pains-taking, and a long process of diabolical influence, Satan has trained up an individual, and fitted him to do him service; Christ often sends his Spirit, and converts that individual, and enlists all his powers for the promotion of his own kingdom. Thus it was with Saul of Tarsus, with Augustine of Hippo, with Luther the reformer, with John Bunyan, John Newton, and many others. Those individuals, from whom Satan had expected the most eminent service, have in numerous instances, by the power of the Spirit, been taken from him, and been made the most distinguished instruments of promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ.

Revivals of religion are generally so ordered—perhaps they always are—as to be not only most glorious to the Savior, but most perplexing to his great Adversary. When, by much contrivance and labor, Satan has brought about such a state of things in a church or a town, that error has become popular, and vice and wickedness seem likely to prevail—when the hearts of God's people are distressed, and they have no resource but to cast themselves directly on the power and mercy of their heavenly Father; it is then, in most instances, that the Holy Spirit is sent; the ranks of the enemy are broken; his designs are frus-

trated; and those on whom he had chiefly relied to perpetrate his works of mischief, are often brought into the kingdom of Christ. So commonly has this representation been verified, that it has come to be a maxim, in the spiritual world, as well as in the natural, that "the darkest time in the night is just before the dawn of day." In a word, by his alliance with the Holy Spirit, Christ has all the resources of heaven at his control. He wields a power, before which Satan and all his legions are but worms. He is able to take the prey from the mighty, and to deliver the captives of the terrible one, till infinite wisdom and goodness have said, *It is enough.*

Having thus pointed out the manner in which this great conflict, on both sides, is carried on, I proceed, lastly, to notice its *issues* and *results*. What is to be the *end* of it, and what the *consequences*, to either party.

The issue of the great conflict between light and darkness, good and evil, the Prince of peace and the powers of hell, cannot be doubtful. It is clearly disclosed to us in the Bible; and might be satisfactorily anticipated, even if the Bible had not revealed it. This conflict has now been carried on, with varied success and prospects, for thousands of years. It will still continue, for a little season. It will thicken, and wax more portentous and dreadful, as it verges to its termination. Satan will come out in unwonted wrath, when it comes to be evident that his time is short. But he will, at length, be utterly defeated and ruined.

He will first be defeated on his own chosen ground—the ground of *earth*. This earth shall be taken from him, and given, for a long period, to Christ and his people. "The kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." "I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years shall be fulfilled." This is the *first* defeat of Satan; his first effectual confinement and exclusion from wasting and desolating the earth. His *final* defeat and overthrow are deferred for a little season.

Having been loosed from his prison at the close of the Millenium, that another experiment might be made of the dreadful evil of sin, and of what the human heart is capable, and having gathered the wicked nations together, in number as the sand of the sea, against the camp of the saints and the beloved city; suddenly *fire descends from God out of heaven, and devours them all.*

The end of all things earthly is now come. The devil, that deceived the nations, is finally taken, and "cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." Rev. 20: 10.

Such is the termination of the great conflict between the Prince of light, and the powers of darkness, in reference to this world. It ends

in the utter defeat and overthrow of Satan, and all his host, and all those who have been leagued and confederated with him. They are sent away accursed to the prison of despair. They are placed in a situation where they can plot against God and his people, and disturb the order and happiness of holy beings, no more forever.

The results of the great conflict to Christ and his Church, will be most triumphant and glorious. Christ must reign on his Mediatorial throne, till he has put all enemies under his feet; and when this is done, he will stand forth before the created universe, in the height of his power, and in the brightness of his glory. He will be seen to be "exalted, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come."

Christ's triumph over the principalities and powers of darkness will be the more glorious, because it is a *moral* triumph, accomplished, not by physical omnipotence, but chiefly by spiritual influences and moral means. It will be the triumph of light over darkness, of truth over falsehood, of right and equity over treason and rebellion, of holiness over sin. It will display, in the brightest manner, the transcendent glories of the Savior; while it will rescue a great multitude which no man can number from the tyranny and slavery of sin and Satan, and make them the eternal trophies of his victorious grace. It will restore the disturbed, the broken order of the universe, and place things in a situation, both in the worlds below, and the worlds above, where they may move on without change, without interruption forever. Those that are holy will be holy still, and those that are filthy will be filthy still. The happiness of heaven will never be interrupted, and the fires of hell will never cease.

In short, the results of the great conflict, which we have considered, will be most honorable to the Savior, and satisfactory in the highest degree, to all his friends. On the other hand, these results will be most humiliating, mortifying, desolating, terrible, to the whole company of his final enemies. They will be involved in a defeat from which they can never rise; in an overthrow and ruin irretrievable and eternal.

REFLECTIONS.

1. It follows from what has been said, that those are in a great error, who deny the existence and agency of fallen spirits. The persons who make this denial do it under the impression, that the doctrine of fallen spirits—of a literal devil and his angels, is *unreasonable*. But I can see nothing unreasonable in this doctrine. It certainly is not unreasonable that God should create spirits; for he is "the Father of *our* spirits." Neither is it unreasonable that he should create spirits of a higher order than ourselves, and not encumbered, as we are, with gross material bodies. Nor is it unreasonable that he should make these higher spirits free moral agents, and put them on trial, and

that, in the progress of their trial, some of them should be left to abuse their free agency, and fall into sin. And yet such an act would constitute them *fallen spirits*; just what we suppose the devil and his angels to be.

And as there is nothing unreasonable in the doctrine of fallen spirits, so (as every reader of the Bible knows) it is *abundantly scriptural*. I need not quote passages in proof of this declaration. It would be just as easy to prove, from the language of the Bible, that there is a devil, as that there is a God. The Scriptures speak as expressly, and well nigh as often, of fallen wicked angels, as they do of wicked men.

Nor is this all that requires to be said on the subject. The history of our world is a full and continual illustration of the reality and power of Satanic influence. Man being what he now is, there would have been wickedness on earth, much wickedness, if there was no devil. But we see something besides mere wickedness here. We see *organized, systematized* wickedness. We see far-reaching, wide-spreading *schemes* of wickedness, which tell of an authorship vastly superior to our own. We see a conflict carried on against God and his Christ—one of long standing, and of prodigious extent—which, though it engrosses millions of hearts, and employs millions of hands, is yet manifestly under the direction of some one mighty, malignant spirit, who skilfully plans what his numberless vassals execute, and controls the springs which move the whole machinery of human rebellion and sin. In short, the book of providence, not less than that of revelation, proclaims the existence and agency of fallen spirits. The doctrine can no more be eradicated or explained away from the one of these volumes, than from the other.

2. It may easily be accounted for, in view of what has been said, that this world should be an object of intense and absorbing interest to the higher orders of intelligent creatures. That it is so, the Scriptures positively assert; and that it should be so, is not at all unaccountable or wonderful. Here sin entered. Here the kindness and love of a Father were repaid by the unnatural rebellion of an entire family. And here the great Son of God appeared, to perform the most astonishing of all his works—the work of our redemption. Here he lived and labored, suffered, bled, and died. And now that he has risen from the dead, and ascended upon high, earth has become the theatre of a conflict between the powers of light, and the powers of darkness, which moves and interests the universe. Satan is here contending, with all his legions, for the maintenance of his usurped dominion; and the Lord Jesus Christ, with his legions, is contending to dethrone him, and put an end to his dark and bloody empire over the world. While this conflict is going on—a conflict which moves all heaven and hell—no wonder that earth, the theatre of it, should be an object of intense interest to surrounding intelligences. No wonder that, with the utmost solicitude, their eyes should be turned downward upon this little world,

tracing the course and watching the progress, of events which are occurring here.

3. In view of what has been said, it becomes all who hear me to inquire, and to do it with deep searchings of heart, *Who is on the Lord's side?* It is a solemn thought, that in the great conflict of which I have spoken, every individual present is actively engaged, *somehow, somewhere*. Yes, every one now before me—every one on the face of the earth—is an enlisted soldier in this warfare, and is really laboring, either to build up the cause of Christ and pull down that of Satan, or to build up the cause of Satan and pull down that of Christ. My dear friends, where and how do we labor? On which side are we? We all know on which side we *ought* to be? On which side *are* we?

We profess, many of us, to be on the Lord's side; and I hope and trust that this profession is sincere. But let us look frequently and closely to this matter. Let us not be deceived. And if we are indeed on the Lord's side, let us maintain our position there *steadfastly and consistently*. It is one of the artifices of Satan, we have seen, to corrupt the things of Christ, and pervert them, if possible, to his own use. Not unfrequently, he corrupts and perverts, in this way, the people of God. He so far misleads them, and turns them aside, as to bring them into a subserviency to his own designs. They labor for *him* more than for Christ, and promote his cause more than that of their own master. My Christian brethren, my *ministerial* brethren, let us be watchful and prayerful in reference to this matter. We ought not to be ignorant of Satan's devices. How dreadful to be so deceived and corrupted by him, that we shall (perhaps without intending it) do more hurt than good in the world—more to pull down, than build up, that holy cause, to which our lives are professedly consecrated!

There are some who hear me who know that they are not on the Lord's side. They know that they have not enlisted under the banner of Christ, and consecrated and devoted themselves to his service. But if you are not on the Lord's side, my friends, where are you? If you do not serve the Lord Jesus Christ, who do you serve? Remember, there is no neutrality in this conflict. "He that is not with me," saith Christ, "is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." If, then, you are not on the side of the Lord Jesus Christ, you certainly are on the side of the Adversary. If you serve not the glorious Prince of peace, you certainly serve the Wicked One. He may not employ you to perform the more shameful, the more disgraceful parts of his service. He may employ you in such ways—you may do his work so smoothly and genteelly, that you flatter yourselves you are not doing it at all. But be not deceived. If you are not laboring for Christ, you certainly are laboring for his great Adversary *somehow*; and persisting in such labors, you must perish with the Master you have served.

My dear friends, I warn you of these things in season. I earnestly call upon you to change your relations. Why should you continue in the service of the most wicked, the most hateful, the most wretched

